2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

of the Shamal wind and lasting until the end of September. The beginning of this season is known as the *Rakbah*, and the closing as *Quffal*. At Sharjah the second season sometimes lasted until late in October, although the seas usually begin to get cold at this time of the year.

In addition to the seasons for pearling at sea there is also a winter season for shore operations, known as the *Mujannah*. Pearl fishing by this method consists in wading in the shallows along the coast when the tide is out, and those who take part in it ordinarily return to their homes at night. The pearls obtained in the *Mujannah* are usually small and discoloured, although the pearl which caused the dispute between the Sultan of Oman and the Sheikh of Sharjah was found by a wader at Kumzar.

Until recent years the pearl fishers had neither charts nor compasses, but they are extremely expert in finding their way to any bank they wish to reach; in their primitive navigation they are guided by the sun and stars as well as by bearings from the land when in sight, and also by the colour and depth of the sea and the nature of the bottom. The choice of a bank is limited by the diving powers of the divers. Eight fathoms is an ordinary depth, and twelve perhaps the greatest at which work can be carried on without discomfort. Beyond this the strain is too great to be endured long and may result in fatal accidents. Before entering the sea the *ghais* strips off his clothes, places a pair of horn pincers on his nose to compress the nostrils, plugs his ears with cotton wool or bees' wax, and puts on leather finger-stalls to protect his fingers against abrasions. He also attaches a small bag of coir matting round his neck or waist. He is lowered into the sea by means of a long rope with a noose in which he places his foot, and a stone or lead sinker weighing ten or more pounds.

On reaching the bottom the diver removes his foot from the noose and proceeds to grope along the bed with one hand and one foot, using the second foot to propel himself and the disengaged hand to collect oysters. It is said that oysters are generally found open-mouthed, but close up when approached. When he cannot hold his breath any longer the diver signals to the *siyub* by jerking the rope and is immediately hauled up. A diver normally remains below the surface for forty or seventy-five seconds, although one minute is the average; in favourable weather he will make as many as fifty plunges in a day. It is rarely that a diver is attacked by a shark (*jarjur*) or dog-fish, but a few years ago an unusual number

The Trucial Coast

133 The most typical feature of this mono-
● 502 tonously low and sandy coast is the khor, or
721 salt-water inlet. Most of these inlets are little more than ten feet deep, and boats other than those constructed by the maritime robbers of old were unable to approach with-

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TO 133 ●502 721

in two miles from their entrances. Thus it was that the pirate tribes were able to build their towns behind these natural booms, and to carry on their ruthless calling in defiance of the British and Portuguese navies — and to earn for their stronghold the much feared and romantic name, "The Pirate Coast".

TO 101 631 648 628 [527]

Trucial 'Oman, as it is called today, is ruled by six independent sheikhs, bound under old treaties with Britain to maintain a maritime truce for the prevention of piracy and slave-trading. Family feuds and inter-tribal quarrelling are as common among them as are the rusty, ancient cannon. Many of the latter are no doubt from British men-o'-war, and some are still used for ceremonial occasions, a party afterwards being despatched to retrieve the cannon-balls.

TO 361 504 439

Unspoiled by time, Sharjah is one of the principal little towns, but it lacks the enchantment of Dibai, a picturesque centre a few miles along the coast to the west. A wide, shallow inlet divides Dibái and its waterfront of quaint little coffee-houses, and provides anchorage for dhows that bring transshipped goods from other continents. In the large market-place, spread on either side of the inlet and connected by a ferry-service of numerous little pole-propelled craft, the bedouin, with his henna-dyed beard and ancient rifle, can be seen fingering everything that is on show, from modern radio sets to ladies' lingerie, but he has little use for some of the strange products of the West.

TO 443 501 B 302 114